HUMDRUM HOLINESS

LIFE had grown drab for Raymond Brooks. The romance had faded, and only the long, dusty road of level days stretched on ahead. "What breaks my courage is the seeming futility of the whole thing," he said to his minister one day. "You know, I wanted to be a foreign missionary, and then dad died, and I had to go to work to help support the family; and that consumes all my time and energy. I have no time for service in the larger way. That's what bothers me."

"Did you ever think, Raymond," asked the old minister, "that there is such a thing in life as an unconscious ministry?"

"Why, no," he replied. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"Do you remember when Paul and Silas were put in prison, and they sang at midnight, that the story adds, 'and the prisoners heard them'? That prison wasn't the most propitious place on earth to hold a song service, but they sang because they felt like it; and although they knew it not, the other prisoners heard them and were cheered."

"Yes, but what has that to do with my case?" Raymond asked.

"A great deal, my boy, because that is the way life works. It isn't given to many to do the conspicuous, conscious service, and so the ministry of the great majority has to be unconscious, like that of Paul and Silas. You remember that beautiful poem of Robert Browning's, Pippa Passes? The theme is simple, but the tale is the same. A little Italian flower girl passed beneath a window of shame one beautiful spring morning singing her song like a lark on the wing about God's being in his heaven, and all being well with the world. She never knew it, but the song went home and preached its sermon in the room above. I could go on multiplying illustrations of that sort almost indefinitely, but I'll give you only one more.

"Sir Walter Scott put his bowling green in a queer place at Abbotsford, and built a little summerhouse near it. He told Lockhart why. It was so that on a summer evening he might sit secluded in that summerhouse and hear Peter, his old coachman, at his evening devotions. Peter would have been covered with confusion had he known his master was listening. But he performed his ministry, although it was an unconscious one.

"Scientists tell us, Raymond, that we can't lift our foot from the earth without changing the centre of equilibrium for the universe. It's the same in the spiritual realm. When we do our best some one else is helped by it. A sufficient proof of that is a mother. We may forget what she says; we shall never forget what she *is*. There is a great deal of sentimental nonsense in the world about flowers born to blush unseen and to waste their sweetness on the desert air. Goodness can't be hidden any more than sunlight. When Moses came down from the mountain the people noticed that his face shone. He didn't know it. It was an unconscious ministry, a sort of by-product of his companionship with God, but it was real, nevertheless.

"No, Raymond, life may seem as stagnant as the bottom of a well and as untouched with romance as a mud bank, but there's always a light breaking through it when a man does his best that touches with divinity the other lives near by and strengthens them."

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